Un-proofed version, Xuefei Shi & Hangwei Li (2023): Chinese Buddhism in Africa: The Entanglement of Religion, Politics and Diaspora, *Contemporary Buddhism*, DOI: 10.1080/14639947.2023.2242074

Chinese Buddhism in Africa:

The Entanglement of Religion, Politics and Diaspora

Xuefei Shi
&
Hangwei Li

Abstract

This article explores the advent of Chinese Buddhism in Africa and its entanglement with politics and the contemporary Chinese transnationalism. It explores a previously uncharted territory of the endeavours of Chinese Buddhist organizations and the transnational elements of Chinese religions in Africa. Drawing on ethnographic data from South Africa, Tanzania, Botswana, and Malawi, this article examines the mobility of transnational Chinese Buddhism, probes retrospectively into their origins and drives, and investigates their connections with the evolving China-Africa/Taiwan-Africa engagements. The article argues that contemporary Chinese Buddhism in Africa is a product of connections and competitions between states, African politics, and the multi-layered Chinese diaspora. The political, social, and cultural influences of transnational Chinese Buddhists in Africa warrant further exploration and analysis.

Keywords: China-Africa; Chinese Buddhism; Taiwan-Africa; Chinese diaspora; Transnationalism

Introduction

"Boom, boom-boom, boom." Every day before dawn, children living in the Amitofo Care Center in Malawi wake up to hastening bell and drum beats, assemble in the central hall with sleepy eyes half-open, and begin their morning class chanting Buddhist incantations and listening to the Master's instructions on Dharma, life, and study. This group of young African pupils, being educated under strict oriental monastic rules, presents a rare scene for anyone involved with Africa's prominent religious landscape. It renders a spectacular prelude in Nicole Schafer's documentary *Buddha in Africa*, which aims to depict the conflict between indigenous African and faraway Asian cultures through the struggle of one talented Malawian teenager.

The featured Amitofo Care Center (hereafter ACC), founded by a Taiwanese monk named Hui Li and was registered as a non-profit organization with funding primarily coming from the Taiwanese Buddhist society. The documentary's controversial topic has sparked heated debate in virtual spaces, with Africans' confusion of an alien religion contrasting with Taiwanese' doubt about the appropriateness of promoting Buddhism overseas through the adoption of African orphans. It is little wonder that some viewers felt demeaned when the director intended to provide a lens into China's soft power, neo-colonialism, and scramble in Africa (Schafer 2020); terms that are more frequently used to describe *Beijing*'s foreign policy rather than *Taipei*'s.

The binary Beijing-Taipei opposition is all but a superficial interpretation of the story: Buddhisms from Taiwan and Mainland China are essentially identical when observed from a doctrinal perspective (Laliberté and Travagnin 2019). Yet, contrasting with the mainland's state-religion dynamics over the past seven decades, Taiwan's more permissive policies have allowed a more expedited transnationalization and globalization of its Buddhist organizations (Ashiwa and Wank 2005; Chan 2015; Ji et al., 2019), best illustrated by the global outreach of Taiwan's socially engaged Buddhist movements (Schak and Hsiao 2005). What Schafer's

documentary has (un)intentionally revealed, and what the authors of this article have spent years understanding is a more complex picture of contemporary Han Buddhism in Africa that involves the interests of Mainlanders, Taiwanese, and the broader global Chinese communities affiliated to either Beijing or Taipei. It is such a transnationalized and networked religious undertaking that may have confused those not well informed about the Chinese diaspora and their transnational connections.

This article aims to address the knowledge lacuna on the growing Chinese Buddhism in Africa and reveal the hidden complexity of Chinese transnationalism. It delves into the uncharted territory of the transnationalization of Chinese religions and philosophies, and therefore, the endeavours of Buddhist organizations in Africa. To avoid confusion, "Chinese" is hereafter employed to include those living in the Mainland, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and other diasporic communities (i.e., Malaysia and Singapore). Correspondingly, "contemporary Chinese Buddhism" will be hereafter the term the research subject bears for semantic consistency with the broader China-Africa setting.

Mahayana Chinese Buddhist missions are relative latecomers in the globalizing Buddhist sphere, and the presence of Buddhism, in any of its forms, remains marginal in Africa. However, there has been a new wave of introduction of Buddhist practitioners seeking to alter Africa's religious landscape, prompted mainly by the influx of Chinese migrants in the new century of China-Africa engagements. As previous research has long reflected on the multi-layered worlds of the Chinese diaspora and their beliefs (Huang 2003; Chan and Koh 2018: "Introduction"), their compatriots in Africa are no exception (Cornelissen and Mine 2018: "Conclusion"). Buddhism in contestation as a spiritual cohesive, superseding nationality and political allegiance, further complicates Chinese transnationality by wedging in an extra cultural-political dimension and increasing criss-crosses between multiple subfields and actors. Therefore, we argue that the emergent Buddhist enterprises in Africa cannot be appraised

without taking into consideration the cooperation and competition amongst the multi-layered Chinese diaspora in their respective local contexts, or without acknowledging the transnational backdrop that permeates through and interconnects various partakers.

Thus far, Buddhist studies with a focus on Africa, China-Africa studies with a focus on migration and culture, and Taiwan studies have remained largely silent on exploring the significance of Chinese Buddhists' ventures in Africa. Scholarly works on Buddhism in Africa are intrinsically in short supply. Those few contributors have been exclusively focusing on South Africa and on topics such as interfaith dialogues between Buddhism, Christianity and indigenous African thoughts, or white Buddhists' remedial practices and social engagements (Krüger 1995; Clasquin 1999; Clasquin and Krüger 1999; van Loon 2000; Batchelor 2015). These themes bear much resemblance to the Buddhist practices in the Western context (Prebish and Baumann 2002). After all, a majority of contemporary South African Buddhist groups are either created by or directly affiliated to Westernized/white Buddhism (Clasquin 2002).

The venture of Foguangshan into South Africa has been the only case of Chinese Buddhism scrutinized by Africanist Buddhist researchers. Attention to Foguangshan South Africa and its infrastructure—Nanhua Monastery (*nanhuasi*)—to a large extent owe to the reputation of a highly globalized Foguangshan network and of Master Hsing Yun who founded and successfully promoted the network on the basis of his theory of Humanistic Buddhism (*renjian fojiao*) (Chue Ming 2014). Foguangshan's presence in North America, Europe, and Australia, along with Hsing Yun's charismatic influence as a world Buddhist leader, seemingly raised the expectation of a similar impact in Africa, despite the challenges of attracting local converts in these regions. Reinke's 2021 study on Foguangshan's global projects incorporates his ethnographic research conducted in South Africa. This research, focusing on the specific activities and ideas of Nanhua Monastery in the practice of Buddhism in Africa, offers thus a unique perspective on the functioning of Chinese Buddhism within an African context.

Outside the ivory tower of this single academic attention, there are two other influential transnational Chinese Buddhist organizations currently operating in Africa: the aforementioned ACC (starting from Malawi but having an institutional connection with Foguangshan as Hui Li came to Africa as the chief monk of Nanhua Monastery but later became independent); and Bohua Monastery (*bohuasi*) in Botswana and Tanhua Monastery (*tanhuasi*) in Tanzania, both affiliated to Longquan Monastery (*longquansi*) in Beijing. Their presence has only appeared in a few media reports, yet due to this presence, Buddhism has expanded from the South Africa singularity to a dozen other African countries and has traversed the Taiwanese enclave towards becoming part of a larger transnational Chinese diaspora in Africa. In addition to the non-denominational Foguangshan lineage and Longquan lineage, there are Chinese Buddhist organizations of different denominations, albeit with lesser transnational characteristics, operating in Southeast Africa, for instance, Tzu Chi's humanitarian relief work in Mozambique, variations of Yiguandao in South Africa and Madagascar, and a Zen community in Madagascar that promotes Buddhism through music.

This article draws inspiration from studies on the globalization of Buddhism, transnational religious mobility, and the multi-layered composition of Chinese diaspora that is instrumental in deconstructing the overseas Chinese Buddhist societies. We investigate the mobilities of contemporary Chinese Buddhist organizations in Africa and reconstruct how Buddhism has benefited from, or been hindered by, the intersections between multiple China-Africa subfields and actors, and how these factors were complicated by the structure of Chinese transnationality in Africa. By adopting the transnational perspective, we recognize the plurality of elements and nodes of people, objects, and meanings crossing traditional ethnic and national boundaries, supported by massive networks grown with the advancement of information and transportation technologies. A multiplicity of transnational enterprises, connections, and

infrastructures, interweaving with the multi-layered nature of the Chinese diaspora, become the key to understanding this emergent Buddhism in Africa.

By the time we started planning this research in 2016, Foguangshan had already become a relatively famous cultural icon in Taiwan/China-South Africa relations; yet ACC was only known to a small Taiwanese audience and overseas Chinese, primarily those of Southeast Asian background, not to mention the then-under-preparation Bohua Monastery in Botswana. We conducted intermittent fieldwork and open-ended interviews with monastics, volunteers, community leaders, and diplomats in South Africa, Tanzania, Botswana, Malawi, and China between 2016 and 2020. As travel restrictions were imposed in 2020, we conducted supplementary virtual ethnographic research, and were kept updated by our contacts and therefore have been able to collect written, audio, and visual data from both personal posts, internal and public documents.

Studying Buddhism in Africa

It is important to note that this article proceeds on an emergent idea in religious studies, regarding Buddhism as a concrete form of human experience in Africa (Motswapong 2020). There has been a low amount of research that follows up on recent developments of Buddhism in Africa. The closest one we can locate that systematically reviews an African Buddhism is Clasquin-Johnson's (2017) chapter contribution in *Oxford Handbook of Contemporary Buddhism*, where the author notices new signs of progress and organizations holding Buddhist values across the continent, such as the construction of ACC in Malawi, the revival of a Sri Lankan monastery in Tanzania, and Soka Gakkai International (SGI)'s activities in West Africa, though much of the chapter is dedicated to a synopsis of the history and the colonial legacy of Buddhism in (South) Africa before 2000. In other words, the spread of Buddhism in Africa in the 21st century remains ill-represented.

Meanwhile, contemporary Chinese Buddhist studies focus on its global footprint and tend to embody a wide range of traditional Buddhist schools, new Buddhist movements, and sects, with a geographical concentration on the old migrant communities in Southeast Asia, Europe, and North America.[1] The themes of these studies include the affirmation of Asian Buddhist ethnicity (Lin 1996; Kemp 2007; Prebish and Baumann 2002), the development of particular sects, for example Yiguandao in Canada and South Africa (Clart 2000; Broy 2019), and the practices of certain demographic and ethnolinguistic groups, especially that of Taiwanese emigrants and their organizations (Chen 2002; Huang 2014). In the African continent, it is still reliable to categorize the existing few studies (Broy et al., 2017; Dessì 2022) on Foguangshan in South Africa as extension of those in America or Europe, because not only Foguangshan operates a similar network across major industrialized worlds, but because South Africa's prevailing white Buddhist heritage is also heavily influenced by Anglo-Saxon traditions (Clasquin 1999).

Despite this, this article makes a preliminary attempt to unravel the transnational flows and connections between Buddhism, the Chinese diaspora, and African societies beyond South Africa. Our first step focuses on how Chinese Buddhism arrives in Africa, what the driving forces are, and the question of what role Buddhism plays in the diasporic Chinese communities. A more complete Buddhological exploration of Buddhism's ongoing impact on African societies would only be possible after understanding the diasporic background and the social infrastructure undergirding its transnationalized nature.

Transnational Religious Mobility

[1] Perceptions of "old" and "new" Chinese migrants can vary, see Chen et al., 2010; Siriphon 2015; Zhou and Liu 2017. We consider in this article new migrants as those leaving Mainland since the 1980s. In Africa, the delineation between "old" and "new" Chinese can date from as late as the 2000s.

Our analysis begins from the basic idea in studying religious mobility, namely, how a particular religion travels across borders, by whom and via what channels (Tweed 2015). Faith migrants have ceaselessly carried their deities and beliefs to new worlds for millennia. Relocation of a religion with migrants is not necessarily missionary. Instead, on many occasions, religion is one of the ethnic belongings which travelers brought together through their language, memory, and art. The spread of religions also relies on evangelical missions, executed by religious organizations, clergy, and lay practitioners and sympathizers, sometimes under the push of state. This type of mobility is supply-driven and export-oriented, and usually equipped with sizable political, economic, and institutional support that migrant religious groups cannot equal. A religion can be furthermore imported, driven by the demand from a receiving society. Most literature on religious mobility relates this demand to middle class followers, for example, the Zen, Tibetan, and Vipassana practices in America (Olson 2005). In the case of Africa's Buddhism, importation by the middle class is more commonly seen in South Africa's white practitioner communities. Chinese Buddhism, however, was introduced initially by the evangelical efforts of both Taiwanese and Mainland organizations and later embraced by the Chinese diaspora as an integral part of their cultural heritage. Community leaders and successful businesspersons may in addition take part in the invitation of Buddhism to Africa from a semi-official channel, as a way to increase their symbolic capital among the diaspora and to maintain a close relationship with the state(s) back home (Pan 2019). Therefore, though it is not necessarily an official agenda of Beijing or Taipei to promote Buddhism overseas, officials from both sides have kept purposeful engagement with the outgoing Buddhist organizations.

Transnational religious mobility can be equivalently conceptualized as materialistic flows that involve exchanges of goods, services, and funds (Wuthnow and Offutt 2008). Globalization accelerates such exchanges, where the increased interconnectedness of the world

has changed the way religious messages are being delivered, by whom and via which media channels. Modern media technologies have expanded the coverage of Buddhism the virtual world, making long-distance preaching possible. Supranational financial flows and modern transportation have further enabled massive temple investment and shortened the distance between Asian headquarters and their branches in faraway hinterlands.

Transnational religious mobility further entails power and creates a contended and negotiated religiosity, being shaped by the global political economy, religious landscape of the original country, and the socio-political conditions in the hosting community (Peggy 2004). Such mobility is borne, more out of the multidirectional and asymmetric tensions between social actors and social relations, than the point-to-point contact between religious institutions (Oro 2017). It means competition for power, dominance, and funds, just as Buddhism in Africa embroils Beijing and Taipei's decades-long split, the denominational division of the monasteries, as well as the role of African elites facing foreign religious-political influence. As Wong and Levitt (2014) argue, it is the difference of strengths and scopes between these networked conditions that determines exogenously the religiosity in motion. As such, there emerges a transnational, mobile religiosity in which external and internal actors seek to lead the way for, and have control of, Buddhism's future in Africa. In the following parts of the article, we delve into the transnational character of Chinese Buddhist organizations in Africa that are profoundly intertwined with, and dependent on, networked forces that have served as an essential catalyst for their missions. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that these organizations have now gained sufficient strength to sustain their operations, not solely through state or business support, but through their unique religious and organizational innovations tailored to local circumstances.

Multi-layered Chinese Diaspora and Buddhist Enterprises in Africa

The multiplication of actors, objects, and meanings in the contemporary world has enriched the transmissibility of Buddhism when we understand this from the perspective of people who are willing to spread the religion as far as Africa, of places that are willing to host colossal Asian temples, and of ways to introducing Buddhism. Conversely, the fact that traditional stratification of social groups has been crisscrossed by "functional networks of regional, transnational and global scales" (Pieterse 1994:166) matches the multi-layered structure of Chinese diasporas in different time-space origins, allegiances, education, and occupation backgrounds, and invested interests. Examples of this would include people with official missions compared to people arriving for private and civil purposes, or the established communities—the so-called old migrants—vis-à-vis the new ones that bring novelties from home. The Chinese Buddhist communities in Africa grow out of such connections, competitions, and criss-crosses among myriads of Chinese actors, which are a constituent part of the dynamic of diasporic transnationalism in Africa and beyond.

The proliferation of Chinese Buddhist organizations in Africa in the last three decades coincides with the demographic reshuffling and rising competition among the Chinese migrants, with an exponential inflow from Mainland China and the massive exodus of Taiwanese. Yet the lives and faiths of both the incoming Mainlanders and the remaining Taiwanese are now associated by the common denominator of shared Chineseness, namely, Buddhism and related cultural activities, an intersection between previously paralleled transnational trajectories and circles of influence.

Foguangshan in South Africa and its religious programmes was of limited geographical coverage and suffered from constant mistrust from some Mainlanders who were reluctant to interact with people from Taiwan. In light of this demographic imbalance, new religious organizations and services endorsed by the latecomers quickly filled in the gap. In 2017, the first of such organizations, Bohua Monastery, was established in Botswana through

collaboration between Mainland migrant leaders and Longquan Monastery in Beijing. Following Bohua, a brother institute, Tanhua Monastery, opened in Tanzania. For both monasteries, business and association leaders from Mainland took the initiative, raised initial funding, and secured land donations, whereas monks from Beijing were responsible for the temple construction, public exposure and social outreach initiatives, and theological missions.

In contrast to the clear demarcation of believers and supporters between the Taiwanese and Mainland Buddhist organizations, ACC has found a midway to balance its relations between its Taiwanese background and the growing power of Mainlanders. Besides from migrant leaders and prominent temples back in China, ACC has been able to grab the attention of several Mainland emissaries that have all endorsed its cause of promoting Chineseness. Via the mainland ties, ACC secured a regular body of locally based supporters despite a sharp decline of Taiwanese in Malawi, hired teachers from Shaolin Temple (*shaolinsi*) in Henan province and the Confucius Institute Headquarter in Beijing, and unexpectedly captivated the Mugabes, who let out an estate in their home village for the use of the ACC Zimbabwean branch.

When studying the patterns of Buddhist emplacement among Chinese migrants in France, Ji (2014: 220–28) distinguishes ethnolinguistic associations that build idiosyncratic Buddha halls, transnationalized organizations that benefit from new Buddhist movements, and de-territorialized networks that are cyber-linked and interactive in long distance. Chinese Buddhist organizations in Africa, often appear under the umbrella of religious transnationalism, and inherit similar patterns of emplacement. They are based on the ethnolinguistic divides of the Hokkienese-Taiwanese speaking groups, mainly within South Africa's old migrant society, and the Mandarin speaking groups that arrived recently from the mainland. These groups have become less exclusive to each other in recent years, especially after the Hokkienese-Taiwanese

speaking groups suffered a significant decrease in followers due to socio-political changes and became more open to Mainlanders and the cultures conveyed in Mandarin.

These organizations are, at the same time, highly transnational in a classical fashion and have created connections, not only with their homeland, but also by encompassing the broader Chinese diaspora for fund raising and internationalizing purposes. This transnationalism is particularly important for ACC and its Performing Troupe, who, prior to the pandemic, frequently toured locations such as Hong Kong, Melbourne, Tokyo, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Düsseldorf, Saint Vincent and the Grenadine, showcasing the pupil's martial arts and other cultural learnings they had assimilated. The tours mobilized Chinese transnationalism at its maximum potential, and garnered extra funding besides routine donations. The initiatives also helped find foster parents among the Chinese Buddhists in rich countries for pupils who were usually orphans.

These Buddhist organizations in Africa had, in addition, adopted a de-territorialized measure to connect with larger Chinese Buddhist societies around the globe and to compensate a small believer base on site, even before the pandemic. Travel restrictions further accelerated the digitalization of Buddhism in Africa. Since the usual global fundraising events were not possible in the last three years, the annual visits of young pupils to their sponsors and foster parents have switched online. Long-distance education with volunteers based in rich countries has become routine, as well as the online promotion of Buddhism via platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, and WeChat. The medium-of-instruction is mainly in Chinese (traditional or simplified). In social media promotions, pupils are occasionally prompted to express their insights in languages that form part of the national curricula, such as English, French, and Chichewa.

Counterintuitively, the limited localization efforts of these organizations have created extra space for penetration, negotiation, and fusion among transnational actors and interests.

Foguangshan was the trailblazer for forming an African sangha group. In its early and ambitious years, hundreds of adult disciples from South Africa, the Congo, and Madagascar were trained in strict Buddhist manners, in the hope that they would become the first African Mahayana monastics. However, only a few managed to negotiate the entire transformation toward full ordination (Chandler 2002), while most either quit halfway or returned to a lay life after graduation. In light of Foguangshan's setbacks, ACC shifted its focus onto the cultivation of prepubescent disciples, expecting that one day, some would grow into true Buddhists in a developmental manner. In other words, ACC runs on the foundation of an orphanage, where orphans receive a formal Malawian education from kindergarten up to high school, with daily supplementary Buddhist courses and practices. This approach has so far successfully attracted sustentation from the global Chinese Buddhist societies, and some of the graduates were able to continue with a higher education in Taiwan, Malaysia, and in domestic Malawian universities. Our fieldwork found that even Beijing's emissaries and Mainland leaders in Malawi (and in Namibia where ACC runs another major campus) did not deny the benefit of having such orphanages for the overall image of Chinese in Africa, which was one of the main reasons why they offered help for ACC, besides the political consideration of winning over civilian Taiwanese.

The Structural Complexity of Chinese Buddhism in Africa

With the multi-layered nature of the Chinese diaspora in Africa laying a demographic precondition and transnational religious institutions providing a mobile foundation, the Buddhists' endeavours have become both more structured and more complicated. We have identified three main structural features relating to Chinese diaspora, Cross-Strait relations, and African elites that have governed the development of Chinese Buddhism in Africa: dependency

on migrant communities, co-creation with Chinese and Taiwanese States, and criss-crosses that oscillate between and venture beyond various political realms.

Dependency on Migrant Communities

The Buddhist organizations we study in Africa came into existence with the efforts of Chinese migrant communities, at the minimum for voluntary and charity purposes (Liu, 1998). The needs of propagating Buddhism in Africa historically coincided with the needs of Chinese migrants who looked for the institutionalization of their own culture. Having claimed their elite status in Africa's economic and political realms and searching for symbolic capital, many Chinese migrant leaders and associations now posit themselves as a key player in facilitating various connections between Africa and China, including cultural exchanges (Liu 2018; Li and Shi 2020; Wang 2021; Fei 2022). They are not only avid believers of Buddhism and other traditional Chinese faiths, but also religious entrepreneurs that are able to mobilize resources for monastic buildings in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Before the Covid-19 pandemic, there had been numerous plans to install Buddhist institutes near active Chinese communities in Africa, with even workable architectural blueprints at hand. Master Xianqing from Longquan Monastery told us that he had talked to many of the planners:

> Chinese community leaders from different African countries such as Nigeria, Kenya, and Zambia have requested meetings with us. They told us the importance of building Buddhist monasteries in Africa and they hope we can collaborate. We are also very interested, especially my Master (Xuecheng)[2] showed great interest and he already had some plans. However, due to the scandal, all the plans got delayed as we have to keep a low profile for some time. But in general, we share a common vision with the Chinese

[2] Xuecheng was the chief abbot of Longquan Monastery and a former member of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. He was also the president of the Buddhist Association of China from 2015 to 2018, before he resigned after allegations of corruption and sexual assault.

> migrants in Africa, that is, spreading Buddhism, or more broadly, promoting Chinese culture in Africa. (Interview 7)

Another explanation for Chinese migrants, especially community leaders, to provide collective support and to frequently collaborate with the Buddhist organizations is rooted in the long-standing negative image of the godless Chinese. A Chinese entrepreneur in Tanzania felt that Africans had many stereotypes about the Chinese people, especially the allegation that Chinese did not have any belief, which often made him uncomfortable:

> There has been a common stereotype among different Africans that the Chinese do not have any religious belief. They think money is the god for Chinese and this is not good for the image of the Chinese community. The Whites have built thousands of churches in Africa, the Indians have built temples, Pakistanis have built mosques, the Chinese should have also built more temples. (Interview 4)

In Zambia, where anti-Chinese sentiment can hold significant weight in local politics (Hess and Aidoo 2015), Chinese migrants are eager to improve their image in the country through the power of culture. One of the Vice-Presidents of Zambia Chinese Association explained why his vision of building a Buddhist Monastery in Zambia, like those in Botswana and Tanzania, could potentially be a solution to better China-Zambia relations:

> Many Chinese in Africa are far away from their homeland and have no relatives here. They cannot find any spiritual longing and sustenance; they became really lonely. What can they do during their leisure time? They drink, they go gambling, many of them lose their hard-earned money in the casinos. It is time to build a Buddhist Monastery in Zambia and more African countries. The monastery will become a spiritual home for Chinese in Africa, where they can cultivate their minds, show their dedication of love, and do charity work. Gradually, Chinese people and Chinese community image will be improved. And a good image will be beneficial for a more sustainable China-Zambia relationship. (Interview 6)

It appears that Mainland Buddhist organizations have taken timely advantage of the urgent need to improve the image of Chinese in Africa and of the social capital accumulated over the years by Mainland migrants to smooth over the political and administrative difficulties facing their nascent missionary work. Engaging migrants and their leaders is crucial for the landing of monasteries, which includes, but not limited to, gaining support from local government agencies and the Chinese embassy, fundraising, acquiring land, and assisting with appropriate legal procedures.

With a longer migration history, Taiwanese communities in South Africa, Malawi and Namibia played an equally supportive role in the early years of Foguangshan and ACC. According to Hsing Yun's own demystifying anthology,[3] prior to the temple plan, Foguangshan had already established ties with the South African Taiwanese society by proactively sending high-level abbots to preach and provide Buddhist funeral services. Via this, Foguangshan formed a good rapport with Taiwanese-South African politicians, obtained office space in major South African cities from compatriots' donation, and eventually anchored an investment agreement through the introduction of then South Africa's ambassador to Taiwan, who also happened to be a Taiwanese migrant. Likewise, ACC had been planned in a country that diplomatically recognized Taiwan and hosted a fair number of Taiwanese entrepreneurs and migrants, before Lilongwe switched allegiances to Beijing in 2007. From the Taiwanese community in Malawi, ACC secured land, recruited volunteers for daily operation, teaching, and fundraising, and attracted celebrities as its public ambassadors.

Co-creation with State(s)

[3] See *Xingyun dashi quanji* [Complete Works of Venerable Master Hsing Yun]. http://books.masterhsingyun.org.

Besides the support from civilian Chinese, our empirical work finds that Beijing's representatives in Africa have been in favor of the building of monasteries and expanding Buddhist charities. Politicians have made frequent public appearances in monasteries, giving their endorsements and describing, without hesitation, Buddhism as part of Beijing's propaganda of "cultural going out" (*wenhua zouchuqu*) and "cultural confidence" (*wenhua zixin*) in Africa. In the eyes of these officials, Buddhism's tenets of non-violence, peace, and tolerance can be used as a potential source of soft power and public diplomacy. Buddhist diplomacy is not new in China's foreign relations (Huang 2011), with hopes that peaceful Buddhism will soften China's image amongst local populations and convince other nations that the rise of China is not a threat.

China's engagement with Africa in recent decades has often been criticized as neo-colonial and plagued with allegations of resource-grabbing, corruption, labor abuse, environmental damage, and wildlife trafficking that are alleged to be linked to China's companies and citizens (Chatelard 2011). Several Chinese diplomats in Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Malawi have acknowledged facing growing pressure due to negative media coverage of China-related issues in the local media, and recognized the potential of improving the state's image via religious soft power as promising. A senior Chinese diplomat in Zambia once explained his support for Buddhism:

> Whenever I receive an interview, local journalists like to ask whether China is neo-colonizing Zambia. I told them the answer is no. I tried to tell them the stories of Zheng He, the stories of Chinese workers who died in order to build the TAZARA Railway. But often I find it is quite difficult for them to understand. If the Chinese communities here in Zambia decide to build a Buddhist monastery in Lusaka, I would definitely support it. Because Buddhism is part of Chinese culture and it reflects universality, building a Buddhist monastery will also be beneficial from the people-to-people exchange perspective. (Interview 5)

When building the Bohua and Tanhua Monasteries, Mainland migrant leaders in Botswana and Tanzania both consulted the Chinese embassies at the earliest planning stage. The name of Tanhua was coined by a former political counsellor of the Embassy in Tanzania. Even one of the Chinese ambassadors expressed his strong support of the idea of promoting Buddhist culture in Tanzania and personally supervised the project in multiple meetings with the Chinese community and Buddhist delegation from Beijing (Sheng 2017). He also took this initiative to the then Tanzania's Vice-president Samia Suluhu Hassan,[4] who was in charge of religious affairs. According to our sources, Hassan and her government were reportedly aware of the Chinese community's plan of building a Buddhist monastery and supported the idea.[5] In Botswana, two successive Chinese ambassadors both participated in several events organized by Bohua Monastery, including its ground-breaking, opening, and consecration ceremonies. They emphasized the importance of localizing Buddhism in Botswana and urged Botswanan Chinese migrants to take advantage of it by organizing more events for cultural exchange and charity so that Buddhism could spread in Africa and take root in the society (*luodi shenggen*) (Embassy of PR China in Botswana 2016).

ACC too has a deep connection with the Taiwanese representatives in Malawi, Namibia, and South Africa: not only the first president/principle of ACC Malawi was the spouse of a Taiwanese diplomat, many diplomats and officials from Taiwan have also visited its campuses for support. It has been a constant recipient and contractor in Taiwan's foreign aid programs, channeling aid packages to disaster-ridden regions in Africa via its orphanage network while promoting Taiwan's soft power with language and cultural courses sponsored by Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Ministry praised ACC as the de facto embassies in Africa with love and humanitarian aid from Taiwan (Public Diplomacy Committee 2018). It is no

[4] Now the President of Tanzania.
[5] When concluding this article, we were able to further verify the support of the Tanzanian government with a key Chinese businessperson who accompanied President Hassan's state visit to China in November 2022. This person donated a land lot for the construction of Tanhua Monastery (Interview 10).

surprise that Taiwanese Buddhism is closely affiliated to their government for political and financial reasons, as religious aid organizations, including Foguangshan and the Tzu Chi foundation, have served as a name card of statehood both within and outside of Taiwan for decades (Yao 2012).

Criss-cross 1: Buddhism Oscillating in the Cross-Strait Relations

Contrary to the political confrontation between Beijing and Taipei, culture and religion have served as a common ground that bridges the gap between Taiwanese and Mainlanders. Working together to promote Buddhism generates tangible benefits for both parties. New relationships between the remaining Taiwanese business elites in Africa and their counterparts from the mainland take shape in various areas beyond politics, as explained by one Taiwanese entrepreneur, "it is impossible to avoid people from Mainland if you want to do business in Africa…politics is politics, business is business" (Interview 1). The President of Taiwan's Chamber of Commerce in Tanzania, a business elite who has been working in Tanzania for nearly two decades, served also as a member and financial auditor of the preparatory committee of Tanhua Monastery. Another Gaborone-based Taiwanese entrepreneur provided material and financial support for the construction of Bohua Monastery.

On the other side, in Blantyre, Southern Malawi, the Chinese embassy has been in constant contact with ACC. The first ambassador from Beijing paid multiple visits and attended its anniversary ceremony. This ambassador, now a high-ranking official in charge of China's public diplomacy, alongside his successors, emphasized the importance of maintaining good relations with ACC in several internal meetings with Mainland leaders in Malawi. One of them told us, "I remember ambassador said although ACC has a Taiwanese background, we can still use it for our own purpose (*weiwo suoyong*)." (Interview 2)

The "One China Policy" stipulates the Chinese diplomats to recognize ACC, instead of Taiwanese, as a successful Chinese charity and Buddhist organization in their public speech, but to keep vigilant on the allegiance of the Taiwanese in Malawi. In December 2019, the Chinese political counsellor visited ACC and commended it for the work in raising the image of the whole Chinese community in Malawi:

> "Chinese companies, associations, charity, and social organizations such as ACC have been actively carrying out activities such as food donation, disaster relief, and providing public services to people in need or with disabilities. ACC has been selflessly involved in social assistance for a long time, which has been highly recognized by the Malawian government and the public." (Embassy of PR China in Malawi, 2019)

In the meantime, Chinese embassies in Namibia, Zimbabwe, Namibia, and Mozambique have all fostered positive relationships with ACC: frequent visits to ACC campuses from the Chinese embassies can be verified by our interviewees and online sources. Even the Chinese Medical Teams in Africa have been mobilized to provide free medical services for the children at ACC (Fan 2018).

Outside Africa, Hui Li and children from ACC visited Mainland China multiple times, which included a visit to the Chinese Buddhist Association in Beijing and other influential temples across China, as well as participating in the 2010 Shanghai EXPO. ACC has so far made considerable efforts in promoting its organization and engaging with the Mandarin-speaking world. It runs several Chinese social media accounts (e.g., WeChat, Weibo), through which organization news are published in simplified Chinese on a regular basis. ACC even has its ecommerce platforms (e.g., on Taobao and WeChat), where Mainland customers can make donations directly. On these platforms ACC seldom reveals its Taiwanese identity, in contrast to the outlets from the non-Chinese speaking world where its Taiwaneseness is wholeheartedly represented. For example, ACC's official Facebook account, which is banned in China, is named after "ACC-Taiwan".

In general, traditional Chinese faiths, or more specifically Buddhism, have been seen as a useful component of the CCP's United Front Work (*tongzhan*) to win over the support of non-Mainland Chinese (Ji et al., 2019). The marginalization of Taiwanese migrants and their cultural institutions in Africa have provided opportunities for Beijing to step in. The expansion of Buddhism in Africa is apparently favored by Beijing as it penetrates perfectly into Taipei's extant social and cultural infrastructures in Africa, thus serving a convenient platform for the Cross-Strait policy.

A political organization—the China Council for the Promotion of Peaceful Reunification (CCPPR), has been highly involved in the planning and developing of monasteries in Africa, particularly in Botswana, Tanzania. The initiators of the monasteries have a similar political identity: as the (previous) presidents of CCPPR in each country. Holding such a position, they form close connections with authorities back home, such as the Overseas Chinese Federation and the United Front Work Department. One of the authors observed CCPPR's annual conference in Beijing in 2017, where many Africa-based members attended. During this conference, they reached a consensus that promoting Buddhist culture and building Buddhist monasteries could become an effective way for the reunification cause.

In addition, the Malawian branch of the CCPPR has been working closely with ACC. One of the directors of ACC, who is also a member of the CCPPR, told us that he knew "each and every move" of ACC, and that he repeatedly told the Taiwanese workers in ACC "not to do anything that is against China and the One-China policy" (Interview 8). A Taiwanese from ACC further validated this working relationship:

> Nearly everyone here at ACC is apolitical because we are Buddhists. But the reality is that sometimes politics is chasing you. We witnessed the end of diplomatic relations between Taiwan and Malawi, many of Taiwanese left and there are only about 50 Taiwanese in the country. How can ACC survive without the support of a much bigger Chinese community? We know how important the 'one country, two systems' is for

> Beijing and it is directed at Taiwan. ACC is a Taiwanese organization; it is somehow doomed to play the role to help the CCP achieve reunification. (Interview 3)

Criss-cross 2: Buddhists Adventuring into Africa's Elite Politics

China's relationship with Africa has been state-centered and engaging with Africa's political elites is one of the channels where Chinese officials, diplomats, migrant leaders, and monks find comfortable to implement change (Tull 2006). Taiwanese Buddhists, too, have found it inevitable to establish meaningful contacts with local politicians. Adventuring into Africa's elite politics could have smoothened the initial landing of these organizations but subjugated them to the impermanence of an elite world they may not have been so used to.

In 1992, by the introduction of Taiwanese-South African elites, the Bronkhorstspruit City Council donated 12-hectare land to Foguangshan, in exchange for Taiwanese settlers bringing investment for the sanctioned Apartheid regime. Taiwanese industrialists were given favorable conditions for family and business settlement, which contributed in turn to the funding for Nanhua Temple (Reinke 2020). In 1998, however, the post-apartheid South Africa switched diplomatic relations from Taipei to Beijing and this change of political alignment was a blow to Foguangshan's plans in which funding and incoming followers were interrupted.

Likewise, in 1999, Malawi's President Bakili Muluzi and First Lady Annie Muluzi visited Taiwan and secured a commitment from the Taiwanese government to adopt 1,000 orphans through the First Lady's foundation—the Freedom Foundation Trust. This diplomatic and aid mission was commissioned in the form of an NGO related to ACC, which would be founded five years later. The Taiwanese Embassy in Lilongwe, Taiwan's Technical Aid Mission, and Taiwanese entrepreneurs and community leaders in Malawi were all mobilized for this presidential mission. Based on our interviews, the then Taiwanese ambassador in

Lilongwe had multiple meetings with Annie Muluzi, and finally obtained 34-hectares of land for building ACC's campus (Zhang and Shi 2009).

Malawi switched diplomatic relations to Beijing in 2007, cutting its four-decade ties with Taipei. In response, the Taiwanese government announced immediate cessation of all Taiwan-sponsored humanitarian aid programs (VOA 2008), which included the suspension of official support to ACC. Similar to the challenges Foguangshan experienced, the consequent financial difficulties, the withdraw of Taiwanese supporters in Malawi,[6] and the disinterest of the new government in Lilongwe forced ACC to resort to the Chineseness of its Buddhist enterprise and side proactively with the Mainland business communities and Beijing's new embassy.

In contrast to the landing of Foguangshan South Africa and ACC in Malawi, which primarily relied on pro-Taipei African politicians, ACC's expansion plan in Zimbabwe obtained significant support from the Mugabe family's pro-Beijing stance and their intricate relationship with the mainland community in Zimbabwe. Although the advent of this plan is uncertain, the triangular cooperation seems to have been initiated by Grace Mugabe, the then first lady. According to the memoir of a veteran Chinese diplomat (Yuan 2011), Grace Mugabe, who had an interest in Buddhism and had visited temples in South Africa and China, had plans to allocate a plot in her home village for building the campus of ACC in Zimbabwe. The Chinese ambassador facilitated the securing of initial funding from a Chinese company and technical assistance from Huawei. In exchange, the donor company's investment in Zimbabwe was expedited. This localization project was named after Yuantong Primary School, and China's Ministry of Commerce further approved an aid project to build this school that could accommodate 800 students (Interview 9).

[6] According to our multiple interviews, by the year of 2019, the number of Taiwanese in Malawi was lower than 50, while the number of Mainland Chinese was close to 5,000.

For ACC, such compromise in Zimbabwe was unavoidable as Beijing had an asymmetrical powerful influence in this country. The project became reportedly halted after the collapse of Mugabes' reign, yet ACC's bold engagements with Africa's ruling elites continued to amaze the Chinese diplomat for years:

> We learned at the time that Hui Li, a Master from Taiwan, was going to establish an orphanage in Zimbabwe with the aim of spreading Buddhism. Initially, we were very concerned that this would cause "two Chinas". So, our embassy requested President Mugabe to refuse the assistance, but Mugabe attended the ground-breaking ceremony and stated that he adhered to the one-China principle. After several meetings with Hui Li, we reached an agreement, which we call "*taiwan chuqian, dalu qingke*" ("Taiwan pays, Mainland treats"). The agreement included that 1) ACC was responsible for the orphanage's daily expenditure, such as food and clothing; 2) we (the mainland side) are responsible for orphans' education. We, with the support of Chinese aid and also support from Chinese companies in Zimbabwe, build a school for the orphans. We also arranged teachers from the Confucius Institute to teach the kids Mandarin, and invited monks from the Mount Wutai Buddhist Institute to teach Buddhism and invite monks from the Shaolin Temple to teach Kung Fu. (Yuan 2019)

Conclusion

In this explorative article, we shed light on the history and development of an emerging and mobile Buddhist religiosity between China and Africa. This is a joint product of missionary Buddhist organizations, transnational Chinese communities worldwide, and the political elites, both African and Chinese, who have shown their interest in Buddhism. It is facilitated by a religious transnationalism, which has been amplified by globalization, China's increasing engagement in Africa, and the evolving dynamics of Cross-Strait relations. It is a religiosity of additional social and political significance.

Contrasting with the conventional definition of transnationalism, which emphasizes bidirectional or borderless groups, we follow Wuthnow and Offutt's (2008) idea of transnational flows and examine the mechanisms and institutions that have enabled Chinese Buddhism's mobility in the China-Africa context. Both Foguangshan and ACC as Taiwanese organizations have developed complicated relations with the Chinese communities in Africa, which now largely consist of Mainland migrants. They maintain their allegiance to Taipei, but criss-cross into Beijing's sphere of influence, and sometimes receive backlashes from nationalist Mainlanders and the African politics they have chosen to associate themselves with. The historic rise of Beijing's influence in Africa, one of its most valued preserves in international politics, has changed the fate of the Taiwanese, including the Buddhists, who had invested themselves deep in some African countries before the arrival of a wave of Mainlanders, as well as the structure and power relations of Chinese transnationalism in Africa. Our rich empirical evidence therefore contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of new patterns of Chinese diaspora, which can be characterized by "unprecedented hypermobility, hyperdiversity, and hyperconnectivity" (Guo 2022: 847).

Throughout history, Buddhist mobility has relied on the resoluteness of missionary monks and on the vast trade network across Eurasia's land and sea. The versatility of this religion being able "to adapt to shifts in material support and to consolidate multiple sources of patronage by appealing broadly to wide audiences […] within political domains and across cultural boundaries" further catalyzed "contact, transfer and exchange" (Neelis 2014: 60). Our findings echo this historicity of religious transnationalism in a contemporary Buddhist world, where globalized networks have replaced ancient trade routes and presidents of all kinds have superseded emperors, kings, and khans. By studying Chinese Buddhism in Africa, we contribute to three interrelated subjects: we view Buddhism as a lens into the spiritual world of Chinese diaspora in Africa, a less spoken dimension of China-Africa relations; we reveal the

power relations behind the emerging East Asian Buddhism in Africa; and finally, we provide a living sample of the complicated structure of Chinese transnationalism, for a better understanding of the globalized Chinese community.

References

Aidoo, R., & Hess, S. (2015). *Charting the Roots of Anti-Chinese Populism in Africa*. Cham: Springer International Publishing.

Ashiwa, Y., and Wank, D. L. (2005). The Globalization of Chinese Buddhism: Clergy and Devotee Networks in the Twentieth Century. *International Journal of Asian Studies, 2*(2): 217–37.

Batchelor, S. (2015). *After Buddhism: Rethinking the Dharma for a Secular Age*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Broy, N. (2019). Maitreya's Garden in the Township: Transnational Religious Spaces of Yiguandao Activists in Urban South Africa. *China Perspectives*, *4*: 27–36.

Broy, N., Reinke, J., & Clart, P. (2017). *Migrating Buddhas and Global Confucianism: The Transnational Space- Making of Taiwanese Religious Organizations. Leipzig: Universitätsverlag Leipzig.*

Chan, F. M. (2015). *Rethinking the Religious and the Secular in a Chinese Context: The Public Faces of Foguangshan in Contemporary Taiwan.* PhD Thesis, The Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Chan, Y. W. (2018). *New Chinese Migrations: Mobility, Home, and Inspirations*. Routledge Series on Asian Migration 2, London: Routledge.

Chandler, S. (2002). Globalizing Chinese Culture, Localizing Buddhist Teachings: The Internationalization of Foguangshan. *Journal of Global Buddhism, 3*: 46–78.

Chatelard, S. G. (2011). Unpacking the New "Scramble for Africa": A Critical and Local Perspective of Chinese Activities in Zambia. In A. Vasilache, R. Seidelmann, and J.L.

de Sales Marques (eds.), *States, Regions and the Global System: Europe and Northern Asia-Pacific in Globalised Governance* Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft.

Chen, A. Y., Huynh, T. T., & Park, Y. J. (2010). Faces of China: New Chinese Migrants in South Africa, 1980s to Present. *African and Asian Studies, 9*(3), 286–306.

Chen, C. E. (2002). *Getting Saved in America: Taiwanese Immigrants Converting to Evangelical Christianity and Buddhism.* PhD Thesis, Berkeley: University of California.

Chue Ming. (2014). International Buddhist Sangha and Global Connection: A Case Study of the Master Hsing Yun. *Danubius* XXXII, Supliment, Galaţi: 189–224.

Clart, P. (2000). Opening the Wilderness for the Way of Heaven: A Chinese New Religion in the Greater Vancouver Area. *Journal of Chinese Religions, 28* (1): 127–44.

Clasquin, M. (1999). *Transplanting Buddhism: An Investigation into the Spread of Buddhism, with Reference to Buddhism in South Africa.* PhD Thesis, University of South Africa.

Clasquin, M. (2002). Buddhism in South Africa. In C. S. Prebish, and M. Baumann (eds.), *Westward Dharma: Buddhism beyond Asia*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Clasquin, M., and Krüger, K. (1999). *Buddhism and Africa*. Pretoria: Unisa Press.

Clasquin-Johnson, M. (2017). Buddhism in Africa. In M. Jerryson (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary Buddhism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cornelissen, S., & Mine, Y. (2018). *Migration and Agency in a Globalizing World: Afro-Asian Encounters*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Dessì, U. (2022). Trajectories of East Asian Buddhism in South Africa: A Comparative Perspective. *Journal of Contemporary Religion*: 1–21.

Embassy of PR China in Malawi. 2019. *Zhu malawei shiguan zhengwu canzan wangxiusheng chuxi amituofo guanhuai zhongxin lunyi juanzeng yishi* [Political Counsellor of Embassy in Malawi Wang Xiusheng Attended Wheelchair Donation Ceremony at Amitofo Care Centre]. Retrieved from http://mw.chineseembassy.org/chn/sgxw/t1728688.htmv.

Embassy of PR China in Botswana. 2016. Zhu bociwana dashi zhengzhuqiang chuxi bociwana “bohuasi” daxiong baodian kaiguang yishi[Ambassador to Botswana Zheng Zhuqiang attended the opening ceremony of the Mahavira Hall of the Bohua Monastery]. Retrieved from https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/gjhdq_676201/gj_676203/fz_677316/1206_677438/1206x2_677458/201607/t20160706_8016437.shtml.

Fan, J. (2018, December 20). *Shenru feizhou jiceng, shushuo zhongguo gushi—diliupi zhongguo yuan malawei yiliaodui bulantaier daxing yizhen huodong* [Reaching out to Grassroot in Africa to Tell Chinese Story—The Sixth Chinese Medical Aid Team in Blantyre, Malawi]. *Xi'an Jiaotong University News*. Retrieved from http://news.xjtu.edu.cn/info/1002/69257.htm.

Fei, D. (2022). Chinese in Africa: Expatriation Regime and Lived Experience. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies,* 1–22.

Guo, S. (2022). Reimagining Chinese diasporas in a transnational world: toward a new research agenda. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 48(4): 847-872.

Huang, C. J. (2003). Wings of Belief: Modern Chinese Religious Transnationalism. *European Journal of East Asian Studies, 2*(2), 205–16.

Huang, W. (2014). The Discourse and Practice of a Buddhist Cosmopolitanism: Transnational Migrants and Tzu Chi Movement. In M. Rovisco, and S. Kim (eds.), *Cosmopolitanism, Religion and The Public Sphere* London. New York: Routledge.

Huang, Y. (2011). *Fojiao yu zhongguo gonggong waijiao—yi dongnanya guojia weili* [Buddhism and Chinese Public Diplomacy—The Case of Southeast Asian Countries]. *Charhar*. http://www.charhar.org.cn/newsinfo.aspx?newsid=3437.

Interview 1, Taiwanese entrepreneur in Malawi, Lilongwe, 20 May 2016.

Interview 2, senior Chinese community leader in Malawi, Blantyre, 25 May 2016.

Interview 3, Taiwanese volunteer in ACC, Blantyre, 30 May 2016.

Interview 4, Chinese entrepreneur in Tanzania, Dar es Salaam, 20 March 2017.

Interview 5, senior Chinese diplomat in Zambia, Lusaka, 22 April 2019.

Interview 6, vice-president of Zambia Chinese Association, Lusaka, 23 April 2019.

Interview 7, Master Xianqing, Longquan Monastery, Beijing, 28 December 2019.

Interview 8, Chinese entrepreneur in Malawi, WeChat Interview, 22 July 2020.

Interview 9, former Chinese diplomat in Zimbabwe, Beijing, 20 December 2020.

Interview 10, key person from Chinese Business Chamber of Tanzania, Beijing, 12 November 2022.

Ji, Z. (2014). Buddhist Groups among Chinese Immigrants in France. *Review of Religion and Chinese Society*, *1*: 212–35.

Ji, Z., G. Fisher, and A. Laliberté (eds.), (2019). *Buddhism after Mao: Negotiations, Continuities, and Reinventions*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

Kemp, H. (2007). How the Dharma Landed: Interpreting the Arrival of Buddhism in New Zealand. *Journal of Global Buddhism 8*: 107–31.

Krüger, J. S. (1995). *Along Edges: Religion in South Africa: Bushman, Christian, Buddhist*. Pretoria: Unisa Press.

Laliberté, A., & Travagnin, S. (2019). *Concepts and Methods for the Study of Chinese Religions I: State of the Field and Disciplinary Approaches*. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter.

Levitt, P. (2004). Redefining the Boundaries of Belonging: The Institutional Character of Transnational Religious Life. *Sociology of Religion, 65*(1): 1–18.

Li, H., & Shi, X. (2020). Home Away from Home: The Social and Political Roles of Contemporary Chinese Associations in Zambia. *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs,* 48(2), 148–70.

Lin, I. (1996). Journey to the Far West: Chinese Buddhism in America. *Amerasia Journal, 22*(1): 107–32.

Liu, H. (2018). Associations as Social Capital of 'New Chinese Migrants' in Africa: Empirical Investigations of Ghana, Zimbabwe, Tanzania and South Africa. In S. Cornelissen and Y. Mine (eds.), *Migration and Agency in a Globalizing World: Afro-Asian Encounters*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Liu, H. (1998). Old Linkages, New Networks: The Globalization of Overseas Chinese Voluntary Associations and Its Implications. *The China Quarterly 155*: 588–609.

Motswapong, E. P. (2020). Sowing the Seeds of Dhamma – Buddhism and Development in Africa. In E. Chitando, M. R. Gunda, and L. Togarasei (eds.), *Religion and Development in Africa.* Bamberg: University of Bamberg Press.

Neelis, J. (2014). Localizing the Buddha's Presence at Wayside Shrines in Northern Pakistan. In P. Wick and V. Rabens (eds.), *Religions and Trade: Religious Formation, Transformation and Cross-Cultural Exchange between East and West*. Leiden; Boston: Brill.

Olson, C. (2005). *The Different Paths of Buddhism: A Narrative-Historical Introduction*. New Brunswick; London: Rutgers University Press.

Oro, A. P. (2017). Transnational Trajectories and Regional Migratory Networks: Brazilian Religious Mobility across the Southern Cone. In C. M. de Castro (ed.), *Religion, Migration, and Mobility: The Brazilian Experience.* London; New York: Routledge.

Pan, J. (2019). Actors, Spaces, and Norms in Chinese Transnational Religious Networks: A Case Study of Wenzhou Migrants in France. In P. R. Katz and S. Travagnin (eds.), *Key Concepts in Practice.* Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter.

Pieterse, J. N. (1994). Globalisation as Hybridisation. *International Sociology, 9*(2): 161–84.

Prebish, C. S., & Baumann, M. (2002). *Westward Dharma: Buddhism beyond Asia*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Public Diplomacy Committee. (2018, November 30). *Laisuotuo ACC yuantong baihui waijiaobu* [Children from ACC Lesotho visited Ministry]. *Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of China (Taiwan)*. Retrieved from https://www.mofa.gov.tw/News_Content.aspx?n=95&sms=73&s=67991.

Reinke, J. (2020). The Buddha In Bronkhorstspruit: The Transnational Spread of The Taiwanese Buddhist Order Fo Guang Shan To South Africa. *Contemporary Buddhism*: 1–18.

Reinke, J. (2021). *Mapping Modern Mahayana: Chinese Buddhism and Migration in the Age of Global Modernity*. De Gruyter: Oldenbourg.

Schak, D., & Hsiao, H. H. M. (2005). Taiwan's Socially Engaged Buddhist Groups. *China Perspectives*, *59*(3).

Schafer, N. (2020). Buddha in Africa: The Story of a Malawian Kung Fu Fighter. *Witness Aljazeera*. Retrieved from https://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/witness/2020/07/buddha-africa-story-malawian-kung-fu-fighter-200714164321878.html.

Sheng, C. (2017, March 6). *Tansangniya you huaren simiao la! lyu youqing dashi: zhichi!* [Tanzania Has a Chinese Temple Now! Ambassador Lyu Youqing: Support!]. *Oriental Post Newspaper*. Retrieved from https://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_489e98b90102x8il.html.

Siriphon, A. (2015). Xinyimin, New Chinese Migrants, and the Influence of the PRC and Taiwan on the Northern Thai Border. In Y. Santasombat (ed.), *Impact of China's Rise on the Mekong Region*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Tull, D. M. (2006). China's Engagement in Africa: Scope, Significance and Consequences. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, *44*(3): 459–79.

Tweed, T. A. (2015). Toward a Translocative History of Occult Buddhism: Flows and Confluences, 1881–1912. *History of Religions*, *54* (4): 423–33.

Van Loon, L. H. (2000). Buddhism in South Africa: Its Past History, Present Status, and Likely Future. *Emory International Law Review*, *14*(2): 1285–1304.

Voice of America. (2008, January 14). *Malawei wei liyi duitai duanjiao yu zhongguo jianjiao* [Malawi Cuts Diplomatic Ties with Taiwan for Profit, Establishes Diplomatic Relations with China]. Retrieved from https://www.voachinese.com/a/a-21-w2008-01-14-voa41-58625457/1093611.html.

Wang, J. (2021). 'Climbing up a new ladder'—drivers and aspirations of Chinese new migrants in Ghana, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 1-19.

Wong, D., & Levitt, P. (2014). Travelling Faiths and Migrant Religions: The Case of Circulating Models of Da'wa among the Tablighi Jamaat and Foguangshan in Malaysia. *Global Networks*, *14*(3): 348–62.

Wuthnow, R., & Offutt, S. (2008). Transnational Religious Connections. *Sociology of Religion 69*(2): 209–32.

Yao, Y. (2012). *Taiwan's Tzu Chi as Engaged Buddhism: Origins, Organization, Appeal and Social Impact*. Boston: Global Oriental.

Yuan, N. (2011). *Zoujin feizhou* [Into Africa]. Beijing: China Social Sciences Press.

Yuan, N. (2019, October 31). Waijiao qinli: huigu, zhanwang he sikao [Diplomacy in Person: Looking Back, Looking Forward and Reflecting]. *Jiaxing University News Center*. https://news.zjxu.edu.cn/html/culture/lecture/2019/1031/13861.html.

Zhang, R., & Shi, H. (2009). *Xingjiao feizhou de heshang baba* [The Monk Father Who Walks in Africa]. Taipei: Yijiaqin Culture.

Zhou, M., & Liu, H. (2017). Immigrant Entrepreneurship and Diasporic Development: The Case of New Chinese Migrants in the USA. In M. Zhou (ed.), *Contemporary Chinese Diasporas*. Singapore: Springer.